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ABSTRACT

There has been a recent upsurge of interest in Iowa in educational equity, particularly for minorities, women, children for whom standard English is a second language, and children with physical and mental disabilities. Political and educational sensitivity has led from a de-emphasis on defects and disadvantage to an emphasis on differences and cultural pluralism. Recognizing this, the Iowa State Board of Public Instruction has developed an approach to the achievement of educational equity that includes five components: legal equity, organizational restructuring, curriculum revision, staff training, and financial assistance. The Iowa approach to educational equity is multifaceted. It is concerned with the functional aspects of institutions, functional aspects of learners, and functional aspects of the larger society in which the educational institutions exist. (Author/RLV)

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Educational Equity: The Iowa Approach

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In recent years, Iowa has experienced an upsurge of interest in the concept of educational equity, particularly for minorities, women, children for whom the standard English is a second language and for children with physical and mental disabilities. Traditionally, the concept of educational equity has been interpreted to mean the elimination of the alleged deficits in these groups as compared with the hypothesized norm--usually interpreted to be that of white male English speaking middle class individuals. Political and educational sensitivity in Iowa has now led to a de-emphasis on deficits and disadvantage to an emphasis on differences. This concern for differences has led to a renewed recognition that we in Iowa live in a pluralistic society with pluralistic values, with a heterogeneous population and that these diverse people need to be served by society with a greater degree of diversity.

Recognizing this, the State Board of Public Instruction through its Educational Equity Section has developed an approach to the achievement of educational equity in Iowa that includes five components: legal equity, organizational restructuring, curriculum revision, staff training, and financial assistance.

The first strategy, legal equity, can be defined as guaranteeing "equal protection" in the distribution of Iowa's educational resources to minorities, women, non-English speakers, and physically and mentally disabled children. Founded in 1969 and funded under Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the

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Educational Equity / Section has had primary responsibility for administering the State Board's efforts at legal equity with the exception of special education which is administered by the Special Education Division of the DPI. In 1971, for example, the State Board took the position that "In this state there should be no barrier to education based on the fact that a child may be a member of any minority group." In 1972, it issued its "Guidelines on Non-Discrimination in Iowa Schools" which have been the basis for eliminating segregation in Iowa. Other examples of the State Board's commitment to legal equity are its Multi-cultural, Non-Sexist Curriculum Guidelines issued in 1975, its Human Relations Teacher Certification Requirement issued in 1976, its Rules and Regulations on Special Education, its Models on Affirmative Action, its strong support of Federal legislation such as Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in all educational institutions, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 which prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability, the Education Amendments of 1976 as they relate to eliminating sex bias in vocational educational programs and by its support of State legislation that in 1977 resulted in the passage of HF 254 which mandates the development of all curriculum programs in Iowa from a multi-cultural, non-sexist approach.

Not only has the State Board issued policies, guidelines, rules and regulations and supported legislation but it has also demanded that they be vigorously enforced. In the case of desegregation, for example, the State Board has required its Educational Equity Section to work closely with those districts out of compliance with the

State Guidelines, has required annual progress reports and, in one instance when the local school board was recalcitrant to desegregate, the State Board reported them to Federal and State officials for violating Federal and State statutes, an unprecedented action in the United States.

Legal equity, then, is the first component of the Iowa approach. It is necessary because it establishes the process by which educational equity can be achieved. The second approach calls for making appropriate changes in the organization and structure of the educational institution in order to accommodate the change desired. In the case of desegregation, for example, it may mean changing boundary lines, restructuring grades, pairing and/or clustering schools, developing magnet schools, reassigning staff, changing board policies and administrative practices, etc. In the case of enforcing Title IX, it may mean rescheduling and restructuring course offerings, reviewing guidance practices, extra-curricular programs, recruiting, hiring and promotion practices, the development and implementation of Affirmative Action Plans, etc. And in all of these educational considerations the State Board makes the Educational / Equity Section available to provide assistance to all Iowa districts needing to make the appropriate organizational changes in order to insure educational equity.

The third component of the Iowa plan is aimed at making appropriate revisions in the curriculum offerings, K-12, which will better reflect the pluralistic society in which we live and which will eradicate sex and race bias thereby freeing minorities, women and men from Iowa's legacy of racism and sexism. Aside from securing legislation and issuing policies in this area, the State Board through its Urban Education Section has developed a handbook on multi-cultural, non-sexist curriculum which is process oriented. The handbook provides a process by which local school districts can achieve a revision of their entire curriculum to make it more multi-cultural and non-sexist. Wide dissemination of the Guidelines has

taken place. Progress reports from all four-hundred and forty-nine Iowa districts have been collected, reviewed and an individual response with recommendations for follow-up acitivities has been made by the Urban Education Section to each Iowa district.

The fourth component involves staff training. This includes board members, administrators, teachers, and support staff. The Educational Equity / Section has conducted numerous state, regional and local conferences, workshops, and meetings to provide staff inservice in the areas determined by local educators to be of major importance. One of the important ingredients included in all of the components of the Iowa plan is local district involvement in the development of all programs. For example, all guidelines issued by the State Board have been the result of state committees made up of administrators, teachers, and community people, all conference and workshop planning has involved local practicing educators.

Significant to the staff training thrust has been the development of the Human Relations Teacher Certification Requirement. This rule will require all prospective teachers in Iowa and all teachers renewing their teaching certificates after 1980 to undergo training in Human Relations before receiving certification. It is the hope of the State Board and Department of Public Instruction that this requirement will eventually result in Iowa educators being committed to multi-cultural, non-sexist approaches to education.

The final component of the Iowa plan consists of assisting local districts to identify supplemental funds or services to aid them in incorporating the desired educational changes. Various school districts in Iowa have received Federal Title IV of the Civil Rights Act funds for projects in desegregation and multi-cultural, non-sexist curriculum; Indo-Chinese funds for Indo-Chinese students; bilingual f[illegible]

for bilingual children; Title VII funds for desegregation; and consultant services have been provided through the General Assistance Center at the University of Missouri, the Urban Education Section, and various Iowa colleges such as Drake, Morningside, University of Northern Iowa through Title IV Projects. State appropriations for Special Education students and migrant students have been sought by the State Board, and the State School Budget Review Committee has given permission for allowable growth to various school districts for funding educational equity programs.

The Iowa approach to educational equity, then, is multi-faceted. It is concerned with the functional aspects of the institutions, functional aspects of the learners, and with the functional aspects of the larger society in which the educational institution functions. It tries to provide a continuous involvement in the adjustment of institutions, people and services. Philosophically, it accepts the long cherished American ideal of equality of opportunity and not only is the State Board, DPI, and the Urban Education Section committed to educational equity because of educational, legal, and moral reasons but also for the pragmatic democratic principle that public education was committed to at its birth. In the early years of this country's history, Thomas Jefferson saw in public education a vehicle for "bringing into action that mass of talents which lies buried in poverty in every country for want of means of development..." Today we could say that the State Board of Public Instruction through its Educational Equity Section is committed to bringing into action that mass of minority and women talent which lies buried in Iowa as a result of America's legacy of racism and sexism. Our goal is to achieve no more and to accept no less.